

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 9546

EXDIS

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: OVIP (ELTS, HERMANN FREDERICK)
SUBJECT: REPERCUSSIONS OF AMBASSADOR'S TRIP TO DISCOVERER II.

REF: CAIRO 9352

1. AS REPORTED REFTTEL, I WAS INVITED BY ESSO REP TO VISIT ESSO-CHARTERED DEEP SEA DRILLING SHIP, DISCOVERER II, WHICH IS OPERATING FITEEN NAUTICAL MILES OFF SAFAGA IN RED SEA. WHEN APPRISED I MIGHT BE COMING, GOVERNOR OF RED SEA PROVINCE, GENERAL FOUAD NASSAR, FORMER CHIEF OF MILITARY INTELLIGENCE, ALSO EXTENDED INVITATION VISIT HIM IN HURGADA. TRIP WAS SCHEDULED FOR SUNDAY, JULY 11, AND INVOLVED FLYING TO RED SEA PORT OF HURGADA ON ESSO-CHARTERED DC-3 AND HELICOPTERING FROM THERE TO DISCOVERER II. I WAS ACCOMPANIED BY EMBOFF CRAIG AND MY TWO SONS. VISIT WENT VERY WELL AND BOTH ESSO AND AMERICANS ABOARD VESSEL WERE PLEASED AT INDICATION OF USG INTEREST IN THEIR ACTIVITIES. GENERAL NASSAR ACCOMPANIED US ON SHIP VISIT.

2. UNFORTUNATELY, THERE HAS BEEN AN ADVERSE REPERCUSSION TO MY TRIP. EGYPTIAN CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITIES YESTERDAY TOOK ACTION AGAINST ESSO AND ESSO-CHARTERED DC-3 CAPTAIN AND CREW BY GROUNDING AIRCRAFT UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE. REASON GIVEN IS THAT I HAD NO OFFICIAL PERMISSION TO MAKE TRIP. I HAD IN FACT ASKED FOR PERMISSION AND
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WAS ASSURED BY MFA PROTOCOL CHIEF THAT THIS WAS

A ROUTINE MATTER AND I COULD PLAN TO GO. SUCH PERMITS ARE GIVEN REGULARLY AND ROUTINELY TO AMERICANS AND OTHER NON-EGYPTIANS REGULAR PASSPORT HOLDERS. IN VIEW OF THIS, AND BECAUSE OF GOVERNOR'S SPECIFIC INVITATION, I WENT AHEAD ON SUNDAY EVEN THOUGH FORMAL PERMISSION NOT YET RECEIVED. IT WAS NOT UNTIL ABOUT ONE-HALF HOUR AFTER THE AIRCRAFT'S TAKEOFF THAT THE EMBASSY WAS TELEPHONED BY MFA JUNIOR PROTOCOL OFFICER TO SAY PERMISSION HAD BEEN DENIED. NO REASON GIVEN. HAD I STILL BEEN IN CAIRO, I WOULD HAVE CANCELLED TRIP. BY THEN, HOWEVER, I WAS WELL UNDERWAY. NO ONE IS SURE WHETHER REFUSAL CAME FROM MINISTRY OF INTERIOR OR WAR AND AT WHAT LEVEL DECISION MADE.

3. I AM CONCERNED ABOUT THIS PUNITIVE ACTION TAKEN AGAINST ESSO AND ITS ASSOCIATES AND HAVE ADVISED MFA, BOTH IN WRITING AND ORALLY, THAT I TAKE FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE TRIP AND THAT NEITHER ESSO NOR AIRCRAFT CAPTAIN AND CREW SHOULD BE PENALIZED. I WOULD BE PLEASED DISCUSS MATTER WITH APPROPRIATE EGYPTIAN AUTHORITIES. I HAVE ALSO EXPRESSED SURPRISE THAT SOME GOE AUTHORITIES WOULD WISH TO DENY AMERICAN AMBASSADOR PERMISSION TO VISIT AMERICAN VESSEL, CHARTERED BY AMERICAN COMPANY, WITH AMERICAN CITIZENS ON BOARD AND HAVE REMINDED EGYPTIANS THAT I HAVE RESPONSIBILITY FOR PROTECTION OF AMERICAN INTERESTS IN THIS COUNTRY.

4. MFA PROTOCOL CHIEF DEEPLY EMBARRASSED ABOUT INCIDENT AND SAYS HE CANNOT UNDERSTAND IT. FAHMY, WHO HAS BEEN BUSY WITH ARAB LEAGUE SESSION, SENT WORD TO ME TODAY THAT GOE ACTION INCOMPREHENSIBLE AND THAT HE WOULD TAKE CARE OF THE MATTER SO FAR AS ESSO WAS CONCERNED. I HAVE ALSO SUGGESTED ESSO RAISE MATTER WITH MINPETROLEUM HILAL, SINCE AIRCRAFT GROUNDING MAKES IT DIFFICULT FOR COMPANY TO PROVIDE LOGISTIC SUPPORT FOR ITS OFFSHORE OPERATION IN RED SEA.

5. THIS IS A MINOR FLAP WHICH RESULTS FROM BUREAUCRATIC OFFICIOUSNESS, BUT I WISH DEPT TO BE AWARE OF
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IT IN THE EVENT IT BECOMES PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE. QUOTE A NUMBER OF AMERICANS KNOW OF IT AND POSSIBILITY OF A LEAK IS ALWAYS THERE.
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